

called it, was the ultimate example of total government control.

Now, of course, we are not the Soviet Union. I am not saying we are. But today we are engaged in the great debate of at least this century of health care. But it is a bigger issue than health care. The issue is about government control of our lives. Regardless of how you put the bill that is now over 2,000 pages, it changes the philosophy that the government now will control health care in this country, rather than us as citizens.

You know, the idea that government is going to save us all. We are going down that road of government, more government, more government, more government. You know, government is already the biggest employer in this country. It is the biggest consumer in this country. It is the biggest landowner in this country. It is the biggest spender in this country. It has most of the money. And when it runs out of money, it takes money from the people when they are alive and even when they are dead because of the death tax.

Just a few months ago, the government took control over the financial industry, the mortgage industry, the banking industry, and the automobile industry, just to name a few. But I don't believe the people in this country are broken, and they are not defeated. They showed it when they came to Washington, D.C., this week. They are concerned about government. It is a bigger issue than health care. They are concerned about government running roughshod over their lives. They exercised, even with all of the critics and cynics, they exercised their right to peacefully assemble and petition government for redress of grievances. It is in the First Amendment. It is first because the First Amendment is the most important.

But people are fearful of government, of government control over their lives. This health care bill is just one example of us moving down that road of government is going to take care of us all; it is going to save us all.

Mr. Speaker, this country has never been great and will never be great because we have government programs. Government programs have not made this country what it is today. Individuals have made it. But, also, the individuals that had the right and have the right of liberty, to make decisions on their own rather than government taking care of them all. We are great because of the people here and who have not been defeated by the government of the United States.

So I hope we in this House would turn against the temptation of turning everything over to government. This is one place where we can put the brakes on and say no to government running the health of this Nation. Because government doesn't do it better. You know, this government-run health care plan has the confidence of FEMA, the efficiency of the Post Office, and the

compassion of the IRS, and we should start over and fix the problems that we have rather than expecting government to take care of us all.

And that's just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FIXING HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic health care bill fixes a number of long-standing problems with health insurance and health care in America. The health insurance industry is exempt from antitrust law in the United States. That means they can and they do get together and collude. They collude to drive up your premiums, they collude to curtail your coverage, they divide up the world and determine where each of them might or might not sell policies so there isn't competition in any way. That is all legal. They are exempt.

The Democratic bill with my amendment repeals that privilege for this industry. They will have to play under the same rules as every other business in America. That will lower premiums between 10 and 25 percent, according to the Consumer Union. That is one step. That is in the Democratic bill. The Republicans wouldn't touch that with a hundred-foot pole. The insurance industry is so generous at campaign time, they want to actually give new loopholes to the industry, which I will get to in a moment.

The Democratic bill outlaws denying you coverage because you were once sick, preexisting condition. The Democratic plan denies canceling your policy when you have been paying your premiums for years because you got sick. That is called rescission by the industry. No more. No lifetime caps which are hidden in the small print. People find out about them when they get a serious illness. Outlawed by the Democratic bill.

And, also, the Democratic bill will put annual caps on people's spending. No one will ever again lose their house in America because they lost their job and their health insurance and they got sick. Yes, the hospital still has to take them, but they will take your house. That won't happen if the Democratic bill is adopted. The Republicans will deal with none of those abuses, in their obeisance to the Republicans, their patrons in the insurance industry.

We are going to begin to fill in the doughnut hole which they created. We are going to help small businesses buy

plans with health credits. It is a good start. It is not perfect. It can be improved as we go through the process. But it is a good start at reining in the costs of an out-of-control health care system.

Now the Republicans' alternative, as I said, they continue the anti-trust exemption and the price fixing by the insurance industry. They allow them to continue to deny you coverage because you were once sick. They allow the insurance industry to do rescissions and cancel your policy when you got sick, even though you have been paying your premiums. And, of course, individual coverage will not be limited, so they will still have bankruptcies and people losing their houses.

But wait. It gets better. They have something called the new national plan. That is the key to what they are doing here. You can buy a national policy, and it will be cheaper. And, oh, wait a minute. Here is the small print, page 122 of the Republican bill: Your national policy will only be subject to the rules in the State in which it is written. Not where you live. If you have a problem, you will have to file with the insurance commissioner in the State where it is written. That is probably not too good because we have some States that basically don't regulate the industry at all.

But it gets better. The Republicans are so creative. They have created a 51st State called the Northern Mariana Islands because of the convicted Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff and the scandals around him, the sweat shops, the sex scandals, all that stuff. That is where your new national plan will be based, is the Northern Mariana Islands.

So if you buy a policy in my home State of Oregon and you want to file a complaint, you will be calling the insurance commissioner in the Northern Mariana Islands. And perhaps, when he gets out of jail, that might even be Jack Abramoff. What a great deal. It would be a joke if they weren't serious about it. This is something that the industry wanted. They wanted a new loophole to better abuse consumers, and the Republicans want to deliver it to them. They can't be serious.

So I would say to my colleagues, you can throw in with the insurance industry which they seem to think is totally benign and always there for the American people. Or you can throw in on the side of consumer protection, lower costs, and health care for all Americans. That's the choice tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEALTH CARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, the President and the Democrat leaders here in Congress are not listening to the American people. Today, our Nation's unemployment rate is 10.2 percent, the highest level in 26 years. This is an astounding level of unemployment. It tells only part of the story of the struggles Americans are experiencing and Washington is ignoring.

A deeper look at the unemployment numbers reveals the true costs of the Obama-Pelosi economic policies. The actual unemployment rate in America is 17.5 percent. When the currently unemployed, those who are unable to find work and those who have given up looking for jobs are included, it is 17.5 percent unemployment.

We must focus on the economy first. We should start by cutting government spending to shore up the U.S. dollar. We should encourage job creation in the private sector and increase private investment. We must rely on the proven methods to get our economy back on track such as an immediate tax relief, decreasing the capital gains tax rates, and reducing the tax burdens on small business.

We are living in an economy in despair as we face a two-front war. The President needs to address the economy first; and, as Commander in Chief, he needs to make a decision on Afghanistan.

Mr. President, you cannot vote "present" on Afghanistan. You need to make a decision.

Instead, he and the Democrat leadership are jamming legislation through Congress with massive spending increases, bailouts, greater government control of businesses, and job-destroying taxes and regulations, all while leaving our troops in limbo in Afghanistan.

Washington has it all wrong. Unfortunately, the President, Speaker PELOSI, and Senate Leader REID are proceeding with a 2,032-page bill that promotes the government takeover of health care; and most Republicans have been shut out of the process.

With little room for engagement, though, I have been successful to help improve a bill that I do not like. I have done this for a reason. It is because of our veterans. I have been able to provide important protections for our veterans and servicemembers who would have been significantly impacted by this health bill had the Democrats had their way at the beginning. I have been able to ensure that the veterans enrolled in VA health care cannot be hit with a 2.5 percent tax. Also, I sought to ensure that the VA is reimbursed by the government-run health plan for nonservice-connected care it provides to the veterans. I appreciate them including these amendments.

After succeeding with an amendment to ensure veterans and servicemembers

have the ability to obtain additional health care in the health insurance exchange created by H.R. 3962, my amendment was altered; and, under H.R. 3962, veterans' and servicemembers' choice of health insurance will be left to the administration to determine.

Again today I tried to fix this with an amendment, but it was denied in the Rules Committee. A number of veterans and military groups, including the VFW, share these concerns and support the amendment that I submitted to the Rules Committee today. I will include for the RECORD the letters from the AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association and the Retired Enlisted Association.

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Our veterans and military organizations in support of the Buyer-McKeon amendments are the VFW, the Air Force Sergeants Association, MOAA, the Association of the United States Army, National Military Family Association, and the Enlisted Army National Guard, U.S.

Also, there are Members who are cosponsoring these amendments: JERRY MORAN of Kansas, HENRY BROWN of South Carolina, JEFF MILLER of Florida, BRIAN BILBRAY of California, DOUG LAMBORN of Colorado, GUS BILIRAKIS of Florida, Dr. PHIL ROE of Tennessee, VERN BUCHANAN of Florida, and RODNEY ALEXANDER of Louisiana.

Our veterans have earned the VA health care as well as the liberty to choose whatever other coverage they prefer. I find it outrageous that the government would attempt to dictate where and how these veterans and servicemembers would obtain health care.

Additionally, under H.R. 3962, the authorities of the VA and DOD Secretaries are jeopardized, and the health care systems that they oversee could be affected by the new health care czar created in all but one section of this bill. Again, the Democrat leadership has not addressed this issue that I sought to address, and these amendments have been denied today.

As the Blinded Veterans Association stated in their letter to me: "It is critical to ensure that the authority of the Secretary of the VA and the Secretary of DOD could never be challenged or obstructed by any provision in the bill or by a Secretary or a commissioner from another sector of government."

Finally, it is important to note that under H.R. 3962, veterans and servicemembers enrolled in VA health care and TRICARE will not be eligible for the affordable tax credits . . . available to other Americans living under 400% of the federal poverty level. I submitted an amendment, which would have allowed individuals enrolled in VA health care and TRICARE to receive these tax credits, and this amendment was denied consideration by the Democrats.

I oppose H.R. 3962. This legislation restricts veterans' health care options and imposes a sweeping government takeover of our nation's health care system, and I support the Repub-

lican plan to improve our nation's health care and lower premiums, thereby increasing access to quality healthcare.

According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Republican health care reform legislation would reduce health insurance premiums by up to 10 percent for employees working in small businesses, up to 8 percent for individuals who do not have access to employer-provided health insurance and up to 3 percent for employees who get coverage through large businesses.

All told, under the Republican plan, health insurance premiums would cost Americans nearly \$5,000 less than the least costly option under Speaker PELOSI's plan. All of this without a government takeover of our health care system and 1/6 of our nation's economy.

The Democrats' plan is not about insuring the uninsured or bringing down health care costs. In fact, under Democrat proposals in Congress, up to 114 million Americans could lose the private health insurance that they enjoy today, and CBO found that the House Democrats' bill will make health insurance more expensive than it is now, raising insurance premiums about 30 percent more than currently projected by the year 2016.

We must focus on the uninsured and the uninsurable. The Republican health care plan does just that by creating new health insurance options for small businesses—the economic engines of our economy—enacting real medical liability reform so that physicians can continue to focus on their patients and not junk lawsuits, guaranteeing affordable health insurance for individuals with preexisting conditions, protection seniors' Medicare benefits, and lowering health care premiums for all Americans.

Our nation's health care system can be improved without increasing taxes and jeopardizing the jobs we still have in America. The President and Democrat leadership in Congress must reorganize their priorities. They must stop focusing on job-killing policies. It is time to start listening to Americans and fix our economy first.

AMVETS,

Lanham, MD, November 6, 2009.

Congressman STEVE BUYER,
Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

CONGRESSMAN BUYER: On behalf of AMVETS, one of the nation's largest and most inclusive veterans' service organizations, I want to express our support for your amendments to H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act.

Since health care reform legislation was first introduced, AMVETS has vocally called on leaders in Congress to ensure that any reform legislation would not have a negative impact on health care options for members of our military, veterans, or their loved ones. AMVETS believes that your amendments help to ensure that those who have served our nation are cared for appropriately.

When the most recent version of health care reform was released, AMVETS raised concerns on the clarity of the language and whether or not veterans and their loved ones would still have access to the health care exchange, should VA and military health care prove insufficient for their needs.

AMVETS believes that the three amendments you have offered today help to clarify language in the bill that members of the military and veterans will still have access to the exchange without penalty.